

## METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATIC NETWORK ADDRESS ASSIGNMENT

### ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention includes a method and apparatus for automatically  
5 assigning a network address to a network device in an electronic communications  
network carrying inter-device communication packets to and from electronic devices  
located at assigned network addresses. The network device, also referred to as an  
appliance, communicates with at least one other network device to collect information  
10 from inter-device communication packets, which contain network address assignment  
information. From the network address assignment information in the communication  
packets, the appliance determines an available network address. The appliance  
assumes the available network address. The appliance may access a remote network  
device to retrieve an available, permanent, network configuration, including IP address.